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General and complete disarmament: transparency in armaments

General and complete disarmament: confidence-building measures in the regional and subregional context

Letter dated 14 May 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose herewith the text of the comments by the Deputy Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation, Anatoly Antonov, in relation to assertions by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and officials of the United States of America on the lack of withdrawal of Russian troops from the border with Ukraine (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would circulate the present letter and the enclosed text of the comments as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 99 (e) and 99 (bb), and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Vitaly **Churkin**

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Annex to the letter dated 14 May 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Russian]

Comments by Anatoly Antonov, Deputy Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation, in relation to assertions by NATO and United States officials that there have been no signs of withdrawal of Russian troops from the border with Ukraine

Moscow, 8 May 2014

In the past 24 hours, officials of NATO and the United States of America have asserted that they "have no indication of a change in the position of military forces along the Ukraine border". As is frequently the case, our NATO colleagues, and particularly our United States colleagues, have not taken the trouble to back up their claims with any kind of proof.

In this connection, we would like to add that neither the United States nor any other country in the North Atlantic alliance has so far presented the Russian Federation with a formal protest that it has failed to fulfil, or has directly violated, its international obligations regarding conventional weapons. That situation notwithstanding, our Western partners have urged us to be unilaterally transparent and to allow additional inspection missions access to the territory of the Russian Federation.

This was one of the subjects covered in a recent telephone conversation between the Ministers of Defence of the Russian Federation and the United States. During that conversation, Army General Sergei Shoigu informed his counterpart that, following exercises in the region of the Ukrainian border in late April, Russian units had been withdrawn to their permanent positions.

We wish to point out that, in compliance with the Treaty on Open Skies and the Vienna Document 2011, we have in the last two months assisted in the conduct of a dozen inspections, including an extraordinary observation flight conducted by Ukraine over the border area of the Russian Federation.

Moreover, on 6 May 2014, a United States-Norway Open Skies group conducted a routine observation flight along the border with the Ukrainian provinces of Kharkov and Lugansk. On 7 May it flew over the area south of Bryansk, along the territory bordering the towns of Glukhov and Sumy. The Russian Federation in no way obstructed the choice of the flight route, and no undeclared military activity whatsoever was detected in these areas.

When Russian officials are present, official minutes give one version of events, but the public is then fed conflicting, formulaic, propaganda-like information accusing Russia of violating its obligations.

In the interests of preventing further provocation, we have withdrawn from the border even tactical units which were conducting drills at their training facilities. The Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation informed his United States colleague of this during their telephone conversation.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian forces have continued to mass on the Russia-Ukraine border, where there is a 15,000-strong concentration of Ukrainian troops. Conscription has been restored.

There has been a simultaneous build-up of NATO forces in Eastern Europe.

Against the background of continuing crisis in Ukraine, such actions are hardly conducive to the de-escalation of tensions in that country.

We call on NATO and Pentagon officials to refrain from cynically misleading the international community regarding the real situation along the Russia-Ukraine border.

Persistently feeding Western society twentieth-century cold-war stereotypes in this modern era, when the Internet has a universal reach and the media are free, is pointless and can only harm the reputation of the Western "propagandists" themselves.